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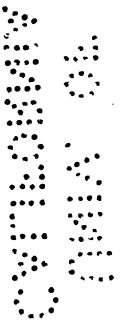

MISCELLANEOUS MOODS

MELPOMENE

MISCELLANEOUS MOODS

IN VERSE

One Hundred and One Poems with Illustrations

BY

Elihu Vedder

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

PORTER E. SARGENT
50 CONGRESS STREET BOSTON
1914

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

GENIUS brings with it everlasting youth. And Elihu Vedder at seventy-eight wears his years lightly. His active mind, roaming the universe and probing all problems, must still find expression. Like Leonardo, he could not be content with the mastery of any one medium. In the sixties while but a youth, he won his position among painters of the first rank. In the eighties he gave the world a new vision of Omar, placing himself among the foremost of the world's illustrators. To-day our conception of Omar Khayyam stands for a trinity of great personalities,—Omar, the Persian astronomer, Fitzgerald, the English poet, and Vedder, the American artist who has put it all visually before us, interpreting its philosophy and mysticism in terms of eternal beauty.

Later he made himself a master of modeling. Few know what beauty of form, what wealth of symbolism he found in marble and metal. Living these fifty years in Rome and Capri, secluded, unexploited, and fearing exploitation,—his best work hidden away in private collections, there can be, in fact, no general appreciation of the range and power of his genius until his varied creations are brought together in a great loan exhibit.

To-day, Vedder in his vigorous old age, still has surprises for a younger generation. He had expressed himself in line and color and clay, and now as he approaches four-score he has taken up the pen. A few years ago Vedder made his debut as a writer in his inimitable "Digressions of V", and since passing the three-quarter century mark he has broken into verse. Not that there was any conscious purpose on his part to master this medium. In fact, in a personal letter he expresses himself as impatient of the technicalities of versification and breaks forth: "Only my

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ignorance of spelling keeps the divine afflatus from coming to the point of bursting,—the fact of having to decide whether you shall have two l's in a word gives the vision time to vanish." And again, "I wash my hands of this rhyming which is little more than a malady at best and shall turn to my legitimate work with delight." Nor has Vedder any desire to multiply the number of books. "All literature," he writes, "should be reduced to the form of a cablegram and the price raised." Rather it was that Vedder had things to say,—things that he could not well put in paint or clay,—and of this the present volume is only partial evidence. There is more to come.

However imperfect the technique, there is directness and vigor about these verses,—there is something in them that lingers after the lines are forgotten. But once having expressed the idea, the vision, or voiced the unanswerable question,—having imparted the thrill or the titillation, Vedder is impatient at the minutiae of technical polish. At the suggestion that these poems be returned to him for final revision, he writes, "I am overwhelmed at the project of going over everything. I thought someone was going to select, correct, spell, edit—in fact incubate. I, the hen, produce the eggs, while you, the incubator, stand close at hand."

Thus, this difficult function has been thrust upon me,—one not unattended with perplexities. Of the one hundred and sixty poems submitted, only one hundred and one here appear. Some of the poems it has seemed desirable to omit, at Vedder's suggestion, for he writes, "Brain is not all wheat. There must be some chaff. Perhaps something may be left for stuffing. I see much of it in books." With the assistance of other loyal friends, Nathan Haskell Dole, Eben Francis Thompson, and Edgar W. Anthony, Jr., lines that seemed faulty have been mended, and then beholding the faultless line, technically perfect,—sapped of its Vedderesque vigor,—it has often seemed better to return to the original. The use of capitals and quotation marks throughout the volume has brought revolt from printer and proof read-

er, fearing they were having a Futurist typography forced upon them. But something of Vedder's free and characteristic use of these has been retained.

The hours spent on this task have been a labor of love which has nevertheless been doubly repaid,—both by the feeling that this was a service to Vedder and by the loyal and hearty response that has come from Vedder's friends.

PORTER E. SARGENT.

Thanksgiving Day,
1914.

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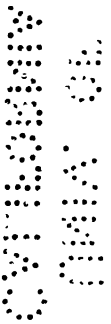

MISCELLANEOUS MOODS

UNIV. OF

AUTUMN LEAVES

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I.

Autumn Leaves

How loud the bitter Wind now raves,
How fast the withered leaves drift by;
Are they seeking out their Graves
Not knowing yet where they may lie?

First borne aloft, then sweeping low
They ever lower and lower go,
Till fluttering down to Earth's cold breast
Each finds its grave and sinks to rest.

Go, fleeting Thoughts,—My Autumn Leaves,
You know how few things old Time saves,
Go quickly then and find your Rest
In loving hearts—not on cold Graves;
And yet, poor things, though doomed to die,
You'll know on which loved Graves to lie.

II.

The Hermitage

Ah! for a quiet Hermitage
A little home, like Herrick's parsonage,
Far from the world and all its noisy ways,
Wherein to pass the remnant of my days:
A place from which, if needs be, I may roam,
But on returning, ever find a home
Filled with fond memories and beloved shades
Of faithful friends, or ever gentle maids;
A place unchanging where I hear each spring
The same birds sing; and in the twilight sky
See old familiar stars, and from the woods nearby
Hear undismayed, the owl's foreboding cry.

My sun-dial amid old-fashioned flowers
Basks all day long and counts the unclouded hours;
While round its base in rustic letters writ
We find the verse—this show of rustic wit.

While the Sun shines clear and bright,
Prepare a lantern for the night;
If the day has brought Thee sorrow,
Hope for better things tomorrow,
But at least the evening spend
With old Wine and with old Friend.

Behold the Friend—the modest board is laid,
Served by a neat and wholesome-looking maid.
Your talk is of old times, your treasures you display,
And as it waxes late, the more you urge delay,
Opposing "Ought to go" with well-meant "Why not stay?"
Then loan the oft-loaned lantern to light him on his way;
However bidding him be sure to send it back next day.

And now with mellowed mind you gaze upon the Stars,
Observing stately Jupiter or ruddy Mars;
Yet,—while admiring the Creator's power,—
You likewise marvel at the unseemly hour!
For there—before your astonished eye
The first faint flush of Dawn pervades the sky!
So, somewhat shamed you hie you to your bed,
A thousand fancies reeling through your head;
And you sleep well—but wonder all next day,
How late you kept it up—how late your Friend did stay.

III.

What is this longed-for Hermitage—
But the last sheltered Anchorage,
Of a strong Ship that bold and free
Once proudly sailed the stormy Sea.

Now old and battle-worn and seere,
Its flag still fluttering in the breeze;
'Tis safely anchored at its ease,
The tossing raging Ocean near.

Some night—ah! who can tell how soon—
Under a dim and waning moon
A dreamy phantom Ship will glide—
Born on the outward ebbing tide.

Quitting its pleasant Anchorage—
Its longed-for little Hermitage—
Drifting on its Last Pilgrimage,
Into the vast dark Sea outside.

IV.

Mirage

Before us lies a little pond
And Happiness stands just beyond;
We row across,—or swim, or skate,
But reach the other side too late;
For then we find that just beyond,
There lies another little pond,
Where Happiness stands as before,
Beckoning from the other shore.

V.

Earth Bound

How fondly round my heart are curled
The clinging tendrils of this dear old World,—
How beautiful its maidens fair and lithe,—
How sweet their smiles, and dimpled laughter blithe.
    How good is Friendship's hug,—
    How fond Love's lingering kiss.
And so I marvel much, what Heaven holds of bliss,
To equal bliss I've known, with all its woe,
In this dear, beautiful, old World below.

VI.

Humble Pie

Dare do the thing you wish,—
    If it's your own,
And then await your Humble pie,—
    And the first stone.
Of Humble pie if need be,
    Eat your share,
It's a wholesome, not a pleasing fare.
Look on the sideboards of the Great,—
    You'll find it there!

VII.

Wind Blown Tresses

Ah, how the wild wind once blew those soft tresses
Against thy warm cheek in a tangle of curls:
How in that confusion I found no delusion,
As my lips met the lips of the sweetest of girls.

Whenever I take from their hiding those tresses,
Laid away with such love and such infinite pain,
The breezes of Spring seem again to blow o'er me,
And those loving blue eyes gaze on me again.

But as well ask the wild wind that once waved those tresses
To bring back the breezes of that distant Spring,
As well ask the skies in whose blue depths I'm gazing
To give back the blue of those eyes that I sing.
Wherever I wander, I wonder and ponder
If she still remembers that wonderful Spring,
And the kisses and blisses,—the rapturous blisses,
And the Wonder of Love in that far-away Spring.

VIII.

Fleeting Thoughts

My thoughts are like the birds of passage
So quick to come, so quick to go,
Scarcely can I guess their message
When their cry is—"Southward Ho."
This fills me with a comic pain.
The birds, at least, come back again.

IX.

Spring and the lusty voice of May
That while she sows, goes singing—
The rapture of a warm spring day,
Sets lovers' hearts and voices ringing.
'Tis ever thus in Spring.

Lovesickness comes,—but soon is cured;
At worst its pains can be endured.
They are the growing pains of Spring,
And not at all a serious thing.
'Tis ever thus in Spring.

So in the Spring while all things sing,
This poor Faun set a-sorrowing,
He'd sought the forest's deepest shade,
And silent, mourned a fickle maid.
'Tis ever thus in Spring.

"Why mourn that fickle maid?". I said,
"And hide you in this doleful glade,
Thou knowest well another Spring,
Another maid as sweet will bring
'Twas ever thus in Spring.

Whom you will think of all the best,
And with her while away the Spring,
Until she leaves you like the rest,
And then just as before you'll sing,—
'Twas ever thus in Spring.

Perchance some owl out of the night,
Echoing your sighs, will mock your plight,
And with you seem to sing,—
"'Twas ever thus in Spring,"
Echo's voice diminishing,—
"Ever thus in Spring."
Faintly,"Thus in Spring,"
Finishing,—"In Spring."

X.

Strenuosity

Those who think the 'Strenuous Life' is best
Can only in a 'Rest-cure' take their rest,
But not in Heaven,—for I am sure that there,
There's too much Peace and likewise too much Prayer.
For such hot-footed, hasty Folks as these,
Another time I'll tell where they will take their ease.

XI.

Welsh Rabbits

In ancient times Welsh Rabbits were
    Both pliable and tough.
No dainty Feeders ate them then
    But Men of the right Stuff,—
Men of the right Stuff, my Boys,
    Men who loved Good Cheer,
Who ate until they'd had enough
    And washed all down with Beer.

XII.

When pleasant dreams by Horrors are replaced,
And Love once warm seems cold, or fled in haste;
When longed-for Sleep has fled, and longed-for Day
With sluggard steps makes too prolonged delay;
When Conscience summing up the long list of my Sins
Most conscientiously again the list begins;
My mind in desperation cries,—"At last I have it!"
And straightway lays the blame on—"That Welsh-Rabbit."

XIII.

You'll be remembered, never fear
By men on earth who loved good cheer,
Shades of Welsh-Rabbits dead and gone
Will nightly sit your grave upon,
And lightly sit,—for thin as air
Shades make for Ghosts substantial fare;
And also by the Moon's pale beam
Foaming mugs of Ale will gleam.
For know,—that sure as Cheese is Cheese—
What pleased on Earth, in Heaven will please.

XIV.

Libations

In the time of the Ancients
So all poets sing,
Wine they poured over altars
Or any old thing;
'Twas a horrible waste
Of good stuff I should say,
So I always keep mine
To moisten my clay.

The preachers all tell us,—
But why I can't say—
That the pleasantest things
We had best throw away;—
Among them Libations.
To this I must say
I prefer keeping mine
To moisten my clay.

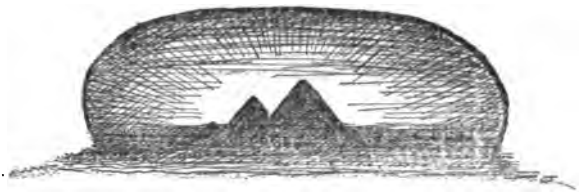
In Libations be modest,
For the Good Book doth say
That old Father Noah,
Too fond of display,
Undismayed by one Deluge,
Invented a way,
Not only to moisten
But deluge his clay.

A Thirst is most precious.
'Tis the nature of Clay
To become dry as dust
And like dust blow away.
How to quench, yet retain it,
I venture to say,
Is to constantly moisten
This poor thirsty Clay.

Like these cups we are fragile
And soon pass away.
So do Love, Fame, and Fortune,
And the light of the day.
While this cup can hold Wine
I will fill it I say,
Not to muddle,—but merely
To moisten my Clay.

XV.

The Pyramids



Mountains of stone, shrouded in Mystery;
Seeming in their vast vacuity
To tell the story of their builders' vanity;
Yet holding wordless records of the Laws that bind
The Sky they point to and the human mind.

Strange yearnings after Immortality,
Tombs of both Wisdom and Futility,
Sole things that resist the encroaching sand—
Foiling the elements, Time stays his hand—
At only foe they dread, stupid Utility.

XVI.

MEMNON

In Twilight of his honors shorn,
Near ruined temples most forlorn,
Old Memnon and his patient mate
Sit in silence and await
The coming morn.

They say that ancient song is gone
That first fell from his fresh-carved lips
And yet — an echo of it slips
Into the heart of one who also sits
In Twilight — mid the ruin of his hopes —
Waiting the dawn.

XVII.

Posterity

To us, Posterity seems dim
And very undecided.
We never know if we shall be
Or praised, or else derided;
And what is worse, we cannot wait
To learn what is to be our Fate.

Then let Posterity go hang!
What has it done for us?
Could we but know what it will think,
There'd be no need to fuss.
We'd better do our little best
And give Posterity a rest.

But as we're now Posterity
To all good folks of yore,
We'd better take that "rest" ourselves.
God knows we need it sore!

XVIII.

The Empty Button-hole

Ah! Could these poor, dumb mouths but tell
Where Envy, Disappointment dwell,
They'd say,—"In the empty button-hole
And in the heart under the silk lapel."
Without the approval of the wise or good,
Unappreciated, or misunderstood,
Quite frozen out, the disappointed Soúl
Peers sadly through the empty button-hole,
Thus making an unseen decoration rare,
Which many a man unwillingly must bear.

XIX.

In a Nut Shell

Would you the difference
Between Greatness and Genius know?
Genius is a gleam,
Greatness a steady glow.
The gentle Shakespeare
No such difference shows,
For orbed in one,
His wit and wisdom glows.

XX.

All Writers seated by the fire
With comfortable pipe or good cigar,
Inclined to optimism are,
And think all things are for the best,
As doubtless all things are;
Yet pictures without light and shade
In this good World of tit-for-tat,
We see are very seldom made;
And they are very flat.
Indeed it is a pretty world,
When its bright side Rwardsrus is twirled;
The other side is black;
But they insist that all is bright,
Would have me paint a black cat white —
And foolishness like that!

XXI.

Old Cicala

Outside, white walls and sun and glare,
Inside, the cool room dark and bare
Where Rita sits and combs her hair,
Singing, combs her jet black hair;
While high in the gray-green olive tree,—
Tzee—Tzee—Tzee—Tzee—
Hear old Cicala loud and dry,
Sawing against the changeless sky.

Hiding against the dazzling blue,
You can't see him,—but he sees you,
For now he stops his merry din,
But only more sharply to begin.
Surely Cicala knows no sin,
Tzee—Tzee—Tzee—Tzee—
He sings so heartily and free
High in the gray-green olive tree.

But even in the gathering gloom,
From some unseen olive tree
Hear him again his song resume.
He seems singing in a tomb,
Tzee—Tzee—Tzee—Tzee—
Such is his never-ending glee.

XXII.

Eve's Senses

When Eve before that famous tree
Stood wild with curiosity,
With throbbing blood and yearnings live
She then discovered senses five.
She saw the apple round and red
Hanging enticingly o'er head.
She smelt them on the fragrant breeze,—
For odors can entrance and please;
She felt them.—Oh! how sleek and smooth!
She tasted.—My but they were good!
Then hearing one fall to the ground
With growing cunning looked around.
"Now let my senses be my school.
'Tis odds if I turn out a fool."
So, testing apple, pear, and quince,
She has been learning ever since.

XXIII.

To a Child

A thousand joys his eyes could see,
His eager hands could grasp but few;
His only task a little play,
Filled to the full his sunny day.
And then that short-lived day was through,
And now he rests,—his folded hands
Holding a faded flower or two.

XXIV.

The Comic Infection

When the comical microbe
Once tickles your brain,
You must write it all out
Or you'll go quite insane;
For your brain is like wheat
With a great deal of chaff,
So the great complications
Turn off with a laugh;
For the great complications
Remain complicated,
And solutions, if any,
Arrive much belated.
You will find these grave matters
Are just as I've stated.

XXV.

In Lucca

In the lovely town of Lucca
One sunny afternoon,
I stood sketching this old symbol,
Trusting I would finish soon.
But its many circlings endless
Tired my eye and tired my brain,
So I did no longer linger,
Hoping to return again.

But like many things projected,
(Leaving as I did next day),
The sketch unfinished and the puzzle
Still unsolved I bore away.

Solved is now that mazy puzzle.
But not solved is that of Fate.
Can we ever living solve it?
After,—is it then too late?

XXVI.

PORTALS OF THOUGHT
Behold the Center Void and Bare
Holds Nothing be it Foul or Fair
But what the Seeker carries there;
Or better Full it seems to be
Of what the Seeker Wills to See;
Thare he may see the Bat the Owl,
The Snake the Toad and things most foul,
Or see in it naught but a Sod-
Or see in it a Living God.
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XXVII.

A Question

See proud monuments of every shape and size,
Or deep in earth, or soaring to the skies,
Scattered profusely over Earth's broad crust,
Fair hollow caskets holding naught but Dust.

'Tis strange how hard Men strive
To keep alive,
In every age and under every clime,
The memory of the Dead;
Or from the gnawing tooth of Time,
Save the frail body, whence that Life has fled.

Is it Men feel that Death is something real?
Something that will endure,—and are they sure
That after Death's sharp pain they rest,—
Nor dream another Life's tumultuous Dream again?

If Man, instead of dying, at once flies
To happier worlds and fairer skies,
Why, then, proud monuments of every shape and size?
Why mournful sables and sad weeping eyes?

XXVIII.

Life's Chariot

In Life's triumphant chariot ride
The Strong, and proudly wave aside
    Sorrow, pain and grief;
Nor think that for the endless strife,
While they drink the joy of Life,
    Human life's too brief.
They, robed like glorious kings of old,
In royal purple and in gold
    Heed not the pallid slave,—
That sombre slave who mocks their pride
Forever whispering at their side,
    "Thou goest to thy Grave."

XXIX.

In Umbria

Oft have I trod these silent Umbrian hills,
Where neither grass nor tree is left to shade
The awful desolation man has made,
Silent, save where the Contadino's spade
Breaks the hard soil, he singing cheers his toil,
Or shouting, drives his meagre swine afield,
To glean what food the starving land may yield.
Here once St. Francis wandered deep in thought,
His soul inspired with impassioned prayer.
And here he found the bride he'd sought,—
Meek Poverty,—to him so passing fair;
The bridal veil for him the twilight wrought
Of evening's stars and sunset's lingering tone,
The vision revealing beauty all her own.

XXX.

A Costly Show

From distant Space to astronomic ears
Comes the harmonious music of the Spheres,
And, we are told, throughout this grand display,
The Laws of perfect harmony hold sway.
Yet dearly for this harmony Man has to pay;
For sometimes from Lisbon, from Krakatoa,
From Galveston, or poor wave-swept Samoa,
Even while gazing at the starry sky,
Comes to his ears the agonizing cry
Of thousands of victims as they die.
Yet laws of perfect harmony hold sway,
And Man but pays the price for witnessing the play.

XXXI.

Truth

You'll find the hardest thing in Life
Is telling Truth, avoiding Strife.
You'd best the form of Fable try,—
Or Parable,—or simply lie.

For, tho' you state it flat, or roundly swear,
That Truth is this or that, or here or there,
You'll find it's not the Truth that doth offend,
But it's the telling irritates your Friend.
Tell then the Truth,—but this I beg to say,—
Your Friend will be less friendly from that day.

XXXII.

A Jester poked at Death much fun,
Till Death at him did make a poke,
This Joke the Jester did not See,
In fact he did not think it one;
While Death much pleased with his Jest Last
Considered it his very best.

XXXIII.

Neptune's Siesta

A cloudless sky arches a sparkling sea
Where sunny isles in purple fade away,
While on the warm sands of a sheltered bay,
Sleeping securely under his protecting eye
The great sea-flocks of Father Neptune lie.

In endless ranks they litter the long shore,
Silent, save for the muffled, dull uproar
Rising from hundreds who, drowsing, puff and snore.
Even their guarding Mermen drowse, nor hear
The faint, soft lapping of the Ocean near.

The ancient god sits peacefully on high,
His beard and hair stream white against the blue.
But how his peaceful mien his thoughts belie,—
He's dreaming of great tempests long gone by
And of Ulysses and his faithful crew.

Born of his teeming thoughts a vision doth arise
Of fronting waves, and howling wind, and stormy skies
Brooding portentous o'er a trackless main,
Through which, urged on by Fate, the hero seeks in vain
A something he is destined never to attain.

Roused from his dreams by fast departing day,
Mid muttering beasts old Neptune takes his way
Where Triton grooms awake with twisted horn

His wild sea-horses, splash the brine in scorn,
As through the waves his shell-like throne is borne.

Huge sea-snakes now their sliding coils unlace
And furrow the brown sand with horrid grace,
While seal-like creatures dive, scarce half-awake,
In cooling tides their sun-baked hides to slake;
Others, like galleys with foaming prows, their ways
betake.

With the last pallid gleam of dying day
All traces disappear of Neptune's weird display,
Leaving but twilight dim o'er beach and bay
Where only deadly Sirens stay,—and the sea moans,
While they sing and play with dead men's bones.

XXXIV.

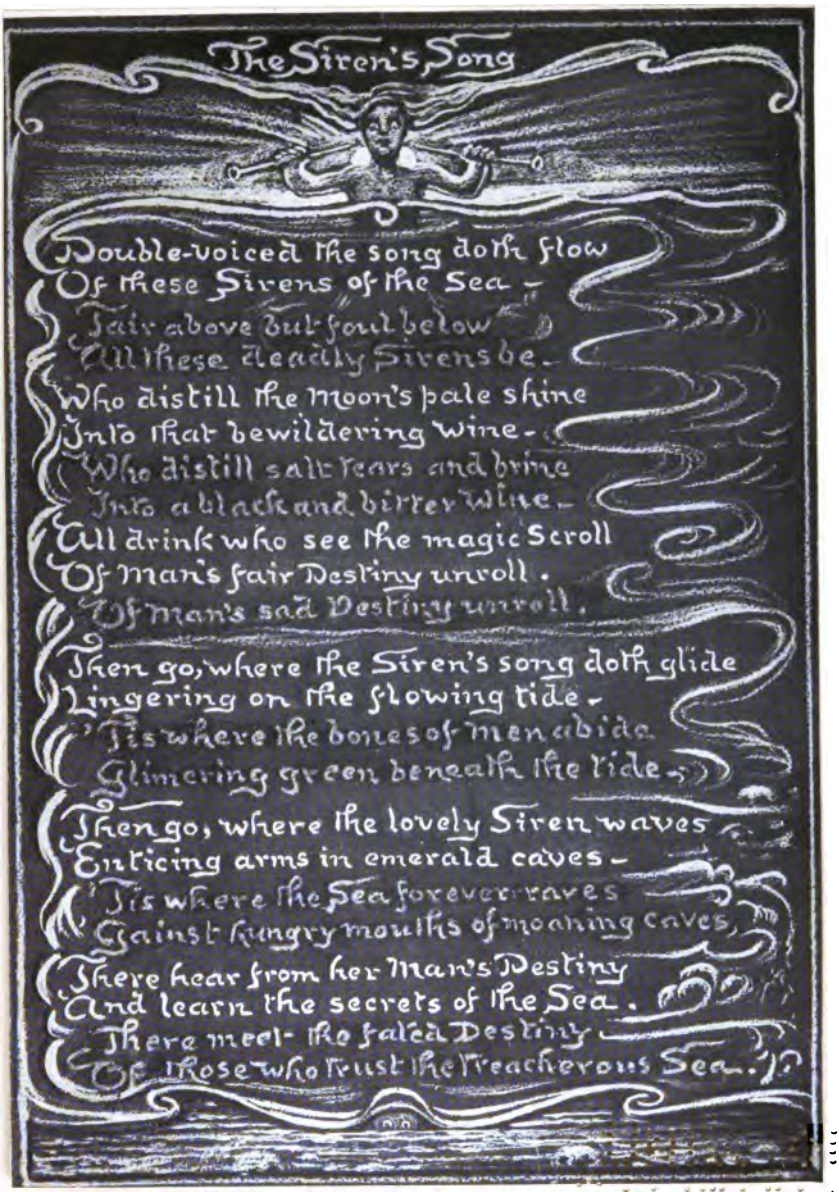
Daybreak on the Campagna

Dawn, from the Appennines descending
To the dim plain below, and blending
With fever-laden exhalations of the night,
Sees still burning in the sky that Star,
Once heavy with the destiny and doom,
Of Rome's great Emperor whose desecrated tomb
Glimmers afar.

Now on the misty Appian Way she sees
Phantasmal armies hasten to their homes,
The labyrinthian catacombs;
Or perchance disturbs an ancient gatherer
Of poisonous herbs, wet with malarial dews,
That baleful planets still infuse;
But warned by a stirring in the trees
And nesting birds that dream of day,
Westward she turns her pallid face,
And following her sad sister Night,
Over the lone Mediterranean Sea,
Fades out of sight.

Now spreads the joyous day
O'er miles of undulating land
By broken arches spanned,
While in the cloudless sky
The glad lark sings,
And on the stretching Appian Way
The drowsy shepherds pipe all day,
Where basking lizards lie.

XXXV.


The Siren's Song
Double-voiced the song doth flow
Of these Sirens of the Sea -
Fair above but foul below
All these deadly Sirens be -
Who distill the moon's pale shine
Into that bewildering wine -
Who distill salt tears and brine
Into a black and bitter wine -
All drink who see the magic Scroll
Of man's fair Destiny unroll.
Of man's sad Destiny unroll.
Then go, where the Siren's song doth glide
Lingering on the flowing tide -
'Tis where the bones of men abide
Glimering green beneath the tide -
Then go, where the lovely Siren waves
Enticing arms in emerald caves -
'Tis where the Sea forever raves
'Gainst hungry mouths of moaning caves
There hear from her man's Destiny
And learn the secrets of the Sea.
There meet the fated Destiny
Of those who trust the treacherous Sea.

XXXVI.

Two Moods

So many make the welkin ring
With their praise of Youth and Spring,
'Tis but fitting that some Sage
Should sing the songs befitting Age.

All things now tell me I am old,—
The passing clouds, the shadows on the wall,
The yellowing leaves that fall,—
All, all, the tale repeat
That I must go and leave the things so sweet.
So,—'tis but right
That I should touch the lower chords
That harmonize with farewell words
And with the coming on of night.

At last I know that I am old;
My busy hands must fold,
And underneath the mold
Moulder away;
I sing thus sadly, for gloomy is the day.
But make the season Spring, and the month May,
No bird could louder sing or be more gay!

XXXVII.

Long Ago

The old Man smiles at the falling snow,
Remembering how long ago,
A deepening blush became a glow,
And how a look of glad surprise,—
Or was it Love—danced in the eyes
Of a rosy girl that in the snow
He met many years ago.

No wonder now the old Man sees
A pretty picture in the snow,
Nor heeds it as it falls, and falls,
Nor yet how cold the wind doth blow,
Remembering that rosy blush
That warmed his heart so long ago.

XXXVIII.

Come under the arching trees
And on the warm grass stretch at ease
Where we can taste the salt sea-breeze
And see the ships go by.

When the wind so strong and free
Blows o'er my face fresh from the sea,
I, forgetting all my care,
Simply wish to live with thee
Forever 'neath these arching trees
Where we taste the salt sea-breeze
And watch the ships go by.

"I'll bind Thee with this flowery chain."
No, take me to your arms again,
No fairer bondage could I claim.
Upon your breast I'll shut my eyes
And straightway dream that Paradise
Is here beneath these arching trees,
Where we breathe the salt sea-breeze
And dream that ships sail by.

Dear heart, they say all things must die,
That we are nothing, you and I,
That all things are but dreams,
That Life is nothing, only seems,—
Yet this is real to me:
It is so good to lie at ease
Under the shade of arching trees,
Where we taste the salt sea-breeze
And let the ships drift by.

XXXIX.

A Passing Thought

The fragrant flowers bask in the sun
Or idly flutter in the breeze.
The humming visits of the bees
But carry out their destinies,
And when the summer day is done
They sink to rest with the setting sun.

XL.

The Winds

AT TORRE QUATRO VENTI

They blow from North, they blow from South,
And likewise from the East and West,
And all so pleasantly the while,
'Tis hard to say which Wind's the best.

But sometimes they blow very strong,
And also last so very long,
That to round up this halting verse,
'Tis hard to say which Wind's the worse.

XLI.

A World Identified

Wandering through space, I see
A Spirit wandering like me.
At once he asks me, "Where, I pray,
Did you first see the light of day?"

I answer, "It is hard to tell
Just where that great event befell,
But 'twas a planet with one moon."
"That tells me naught, for I could soon
Show you many with one moon."

"'Twas where great pyramids arise,
And lofty spires that pierce the skies."
"That's naught again, on every Earth
Of such vain structures there's no dearth."

"Well, then, 'twas where one Christmas morn
A Saint to save Mankind was born."
"What! Think you God would leave forlorn
Of Saviors, worlds where Men are born?"

Puzzled, I paused. "This, I can tell,
In my small world did Shakespeare dwell."
The Spirit smiled. "Ah! now, 'tis clear,
Your world I know,—I know Shakespeare."

XLII.

Parnassus' Hill

My Pegasus doth lack the will
To climb Parnassus' well-cropped hill,
Or even seek to drink his fill
At its once inspiring rill.
Nor does he feel the least desire
To borrow great Apollo's lyre
And play without Apollo's Fire.
For he, indeed, brought forth such tones
That hills, and trees, and even stones
Joined in a stately country-dance,
(No mention here is made of bones.)
Yet on this spot where it would seem
That desolation reigns supreme,
Around Apollo's smouldering Fire
Our Modern Bards seek to inspire
Not only Trees, and Sticks, and Stones,
But even sapless ancient Bones.

XLIII.

Man's Guess

Far beyond Man's utmost sight
His daring mind pursues its flight.
Yet ever ends where it began—in Night.

The clear eyes of the wisest Sage,
The firm faith of the greatest Saint;
One comes to where his Eyes grow dim,
The other where his Faith grows faint.

Scheme after scheme he vainly tries,
Star after star he sees arise,
And far beyond them in his fancy flies,
Ever returning with this vague surmise
To which he clings even in darkest night,
'Tis but a guess,—
"All things may turn out right."

FAR BEYOND MAN'S UTMOST SIGHT HIS DARING MIND PURSUES ITS FLIGHT, YET EVER ENDS WHERE IT BEGAN-IN NIGHT.

XLIV.

Microbes

No longer can we Eat, or Drink, or Sleep or Think,
Or even Breathe or Sneeze, quite at our ease,
But that we're on the brink of some Disease.

Open a Paper, and at once our eyes
Are greeted by some new surprise.
For there we see them advertise
Diseases by the dozen, by the score,—
Cures for Diseases never known before.
Arising from Smells, and Dirt,
Millions of Microbes flirt,—
Which thus enhance to huge degree
Dangers—we cannot avert,
Find out or see.

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XLV.

The Race

I often wonder which is the better Fun
To watch the runners or be in the Run.
Where we oft see those worsted in the Race
Still striving vainly to keep up the Pace,—
Even when Old we see them hobbling on.
Wise is the man who knows when his work's done.
To some this may seem wise,—but should we settle
down,
And let the moss grow o'er us like a stone?
Doubtless it conduces to a green old age
But is that color fitting for a Sage?
Regarding Fools there seems no settled rule.
They may be shown as Old, or still at school.
It never is too late to be a Fool.

XLVI.

Nature's Way

Nature tells in endless songs
The story of her Joys and Wrongs,
The merest little chirping thing
That in the grass doth feebly sing,
But adds a treble to the glee,
Of the strong wind and rustling tree,—
Or fills the pauses in the roar
Of billows breaking on the shore.

Could I but sing in Nature's way,
As free and unconfined,
I'd tell the story of the Wave
And of the rising Wind,
Or what the little Brooklets say,
As following their devious course
I trace them to their hidden source
And see them sparkle into day.

But I hear the sobbing Ocean,
Its heaving billows keeping
A semblance of Time,
In their seething rush to shore,
Then a hush in the roar,
And a low tone o'er and o'er
In the murmuring ebb and flow,—
Voices of dread things below.

When the gusty wind is up,
Coming, whirling, and complaining,
In its rising and its falling
And insatiable bewailing,
It vainly strives to utter
Some word it came to say.

Hear how its music saddens
As it whispering sighs away.
With longings still unsatisfied
It always dies away.

XLVII.

In Spring

Spring and Cupid come together,
Be it fair or stormy weather,
Even with a trace of snow —
The hasty flowers begin to grow,
And Boys and Girls forget the rest,
And think of all the Seasons
Sweet Spring is the best.

SPRING

XLVIII.

The Lacking Rhyme

Full many a time the lacking Rhyme
Hath brought the Poet's song to naught,
Or changed, if found, for sake of sound
To feebleness his strongest thought.

Should Soul and Sound, together bound,
Reward the labor of his pen,
There is a chance—it seems to me,
His Song may reach the Hearts of Men.

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XLIX.

I Find that—

Great men are not so very great,
Nor little men so very little,
The space between them is not wide,—
'Tis scarcely wider than a tittle!
Yet little men in vain have tried
Their best to reach the big men's side.
We are not equal nor can be
Even with the law's decree.

Then let us make a wreath for each,
For those who grasp, for those who reach,
For those who can, and those who can't—'Get over.'
One made of Laurel, and 'tother made of Clover.

And so to simple Socrates, his cup of Tea;
And to great 'Martin Farquhar Tupper',
His Supper!

L.

Footsteps

"Lives of Great Men all remind us
We can make our lives"—Ridiculous,
"And departing, leave behind us
Footsteps"—that are quite Meticulous.
Then, pray leave them—Microscopic,
No need of making them—Cyclopic.
This said, we trust that friendly eyes
Will see Our faults their Natural size.

LI.

Spoiling Paper

'Tis sinful to take paper pure and white,
And on its candid surface to indite
Long sentences involved, of words obscure,
Hiding thoughts of which you're not quite sure
In shady lanes of sheer redundancy,
Harbouring threats of 'Heterophemy'
From which the Reader, emerging at the end,
No longer holds the Writer as his friend.

LII.

I took but one kiss when I might have had twenty,
For the sweet lips I kissed had kisses in plenty.
But I let my chance go, here I stand in the snow,
Saying—Oh Jimminy!

The sweetest of kisses are those we have missed,
And the ones most regretted are those never kissed;
So don't let your chance go, or you'll stand in the snow,
Saying—Oh Jimminy!

LIII.

Cupid's Little Graveyard

Here lies enshrined in memory,
Counted and treasured with sweet pain,
Kisses never to be kissed again,
Kisses fled 'ere they were born,
Rosebuds pink that mocked the morn,
And sweet vows breathed all in vain.

Love sits dejected by this tomb in tears,
Now the Faun's pipe no longer soothes his ears,
No longer the gay flowers delight his eyes,
And merry breezes only bear away his sighs.
He mourns,—but he mourns not alone,
For this sweet pain all Lovers oft have known.

LIV.

Lines to E. W. H.

In the soft, fading oval of thy face,
A waning moon I trace.
Not that full orb that did my sight absorb
When first Thou gleamed upon my solitary way
And made it day; but such as before dawn
Hangs in the sky for yet a little space,
Lighting all with its pure, gentle grace.

LV.

Gaze Not

Gaze not in the depths of Woman's eyes,
For there a liquid Demon lies,—
    He will confound you!
Nor on her lustrous coils of hair.
Each tress is but a silken snare
    And soon around you.
See those bright pearls,—behind them lies
A tongue full of sweet perjuries
    And sure to cheat you.
And so it is; no separate part
But hath its own peculiar art
Skilled to enslave your foolish heart
    And so maltreat you.
But more especially that hair,
Most dangerous when 'tis most fair,
    Nor safe when curly;
But when it's dark and tempest-tossed
'Tis a sure harbinger of loss.
    I've been there—late and early.

LVI.

He comes from near-by Prattleville,
Polonius is his name;
Explaining the self-evident
Is Poly's little game;
He finds that things quite different
Can never be the same,
And that a Spade is called a Spade
Because that is its Name.

P- - said, "Why bother one's head to spell
When Initials would do as well?"
Now P- - was a wily and wise old man,
And doubtless had his little plan
Whereby 'The play' would have been changed
And H- - made sane and not deranged;
For H- - at best was a wild young thing,
And P- - would have been a better king,
And D- - would not have smelt so bad
Had only P- - been H- - 's dad.

No one can doubt that H- - was lazy.
Most people think that he was crazy,
For even I would have had a cry
Over the skull of my poor friend Y- -.
But an H- - can't be a V- -,
Who fears he may turn out a P- -?
For most of the verses in this book
Have a strange Polonius look:
Moral—first see how you are made
Before you call a spade a spade.

LVII.

In Hamlet's Vein

Observe the expression of this skull.
I think you cannot fail to see
That it's not bad, nor even sad,—
Rather there's too much jollity.
The hollow cheek without its skin
Doth but accentuate the grin.
A gruesome thought you should not miss,
That after Death we're all like this.
And even add this to your song,—
That Life is short,—but skulls last long.

Question the expression of this skull,
'Tis open and by no means dull.
'Tis reticent and somewhat set,
And yet its blank and empty look
Is all the answer you will get.

Life's Game

In this game 'tis always seen
The numbers Added make Fifteen;
Yet the same numbers in a Line—
Counted always turn out Nine.

So those who play Life's Little Game,
Lead different Lives, yet end the Same.

LIX.

Something Beyond?

May we not think there's something beyond Man,
That joys are thirsty leaves that drink the falling rain
Or flutter gaily in the fitful breeze,
Or sink back into dreamy sleep again?
Or, when the huddled trees stand cold and shivery,
Feels the rude blast tear off their crimson livery?

Who is it sees, in crystal realms below,
Where the wide-branching coral-forests grow,
Those delicate translucent creatures feed,
Content to live in that soft emerald glow;
Or others sees, in somberer deeps
Finding their way by phosphorescent ray
In awful night, on meeting, play or fight?

Is there no ear to hear the lark on high
Soaring, pour out his soul in ecstasy?
Or mounting higher still joins some lone tropic bird
And with it, circling soars, or dreaming glides
Through leagues of silent air where the hoarse roar
Of the vexed ocean far below is heard no more.

Something must joy in creatures fleet as wind,
Or others slow who drag o'er burning sand
Their clumsy dome, and deem that desert home,—
Or with frail flowers that grow in frigid snow
Where Summer's sun hangs low.

Were all things made for Man alone? Earth,
The sun, the moon, and Saturn's shining rings?
Is it for Man alone the sweet bird sings?
Is Man sole actor on creation's stage,
And all things else but painted scenery?

Cease seeking, questioning Mind, lest thou should'st
find
A Something caring naught for right and wrong,
Unmindful of the weak,—to sorrow blind,—
Lavishing its favors only on the strong.

Phonetics

Within the body of the Cat
The Sacred Vowels lie;
She utters them in darkness
Or against the moonlight sky.
For her no cellar is too dark
Or fence or tree too high.
If all the Vowels you would learn
List to her plaintive Cry.

One thought her mind forever haunts
Where are the missing Consonants?
With them I should no longer be
The thing I am—a mystery,
But could to a wondering world disclose
Strange tales of passions and of woes.

19/05

LXI.

A Storm in Summer

How can a fair scene change so fast
To somber sky by clouds o'ercast
And pouring rain and furious blast?

'Tis scarce a sunny hour ago
The wind stirred not a single bough
Or even bent a fragile flower.
A few dark clouds indeed there were
Even perchance a passing shower,
Till fell a gloom most ominous,
A waiting silence,—treacherous,
A few stray drops,—a stirring breeze,
A frightened shiver in the trees—
And then a flash,—a deafening crash,
And lo! The Storm in all its power.

The howling wind now dies away
The muttering thunder scarce is heard
And only distant lightnings play;
But in the hush,—up from the bay,—
Comes the low continuous roar
Of the insatiable sea
Ravening on the sullen shore,
Making through the rain's downpour,
A melancholy melody.

Now comes again the pelting rain,
See the wind through the streaming pane,
Tearing the tossing trees again.

Again the lightning's blinding flash,
Again the thunder's sudden crash;
But ever in the following lull
Steals on the ear subdued and dull
The song of the insatiate Sea—
A murmuring monotony.

All now is hushed.—Pure moonlight floods the sky,
The clouds, the wind, the rain are but a memory;
Tired Nature sleeps, her fresh-shed tears scarce dry,
Soothed by the distant Sea's low lullaby.

LXII.

Michelangelo's Dividers

How sturdily on their diverging legs they stand,
Polished by the handling of that great hand;
How many counted steps their feet have paced
And problems solved, as round the fixed foot
Revolved the unfixed foot.

Often at midnight they must have reflected,
The strong face of the Master sitting dejected,
Plotting the curves of Saint Peter's Dome,
Working for God not Man, in the sad Silence
Of his lonely home.

To him his long life seemed a Dream half told,
So much the stubborn marble yet did hold
Which his now aged hands should never more unfold.

LXIII.

A Scarcely Whispered Prayer

If Man when looking on the starry sky
Could really grasp the sight that meets his eye,
Or realize the meaning of its majesty,
He could but gaze a little while and die.
    Our blindness makes us bold,
    Yet meek should be the voice
    And low the tone,
    Of him who would approach
    The Heavenly Throne.

Some the loud Hallelujah cannot raise
Or fill the vault of Heaven with their praise,
They can but humbly bend to earth the knee,
And silent gaze into Infinity.
Meanwhile I nothing know, but leave behind,
What some poor modest soul may chance to find
And wish to share,
This echo of a scarcely whispered prayer.

LXIV.

Sport

I do not go—
Where 'twould be better to leave things alone
Or needlessly disturb a torrid or a frigid zone;
Nor care I for Exploration à outrance—
Where the Explorer forms the pièce de resistance
At a cannibal dinner followed by a 'dance.'

Nor do I ask Thee forth with me to fare
Under the greenwood tree, my sports to share,
Watching the sufferings of the wounded bear.

How sad to think we do not hunt our fellow-man,
For by that plan, we should not only see
His fight for life, but hear his plea for pity,
Or the wild curses of his dying agony.

Ideas of sport however differ; some there are
Who after killing their last faithful dog,
Perish themselves under the cold North Star;
While others risk their lives through wild and bog,
To get a fox's tail.

LXV.

Too Late

Take all the blame, or lay it on Fate,
Chalk up the score, or wipe off the slate,
Nothing makes up for being—Too Late.

And such is Fate. No bell that swings
But as it rings, to someone sings,—
Too Late—Too Late—Too Late—Too Late.

LXVI.

The Milestone

There stood a Milestone on a lonely road
Past which an Old Man slowly strode,
Towards a gloomy wood, and looking back
A devious track,
While looking forward in the gathering gloom
Glimmered a tomb;
And on the stone was carved the number
Seventy,
And on the portal of the tomb
Eternity,
Meanwhile the stars were spelling out
Infinity.

LXVII.

Musings

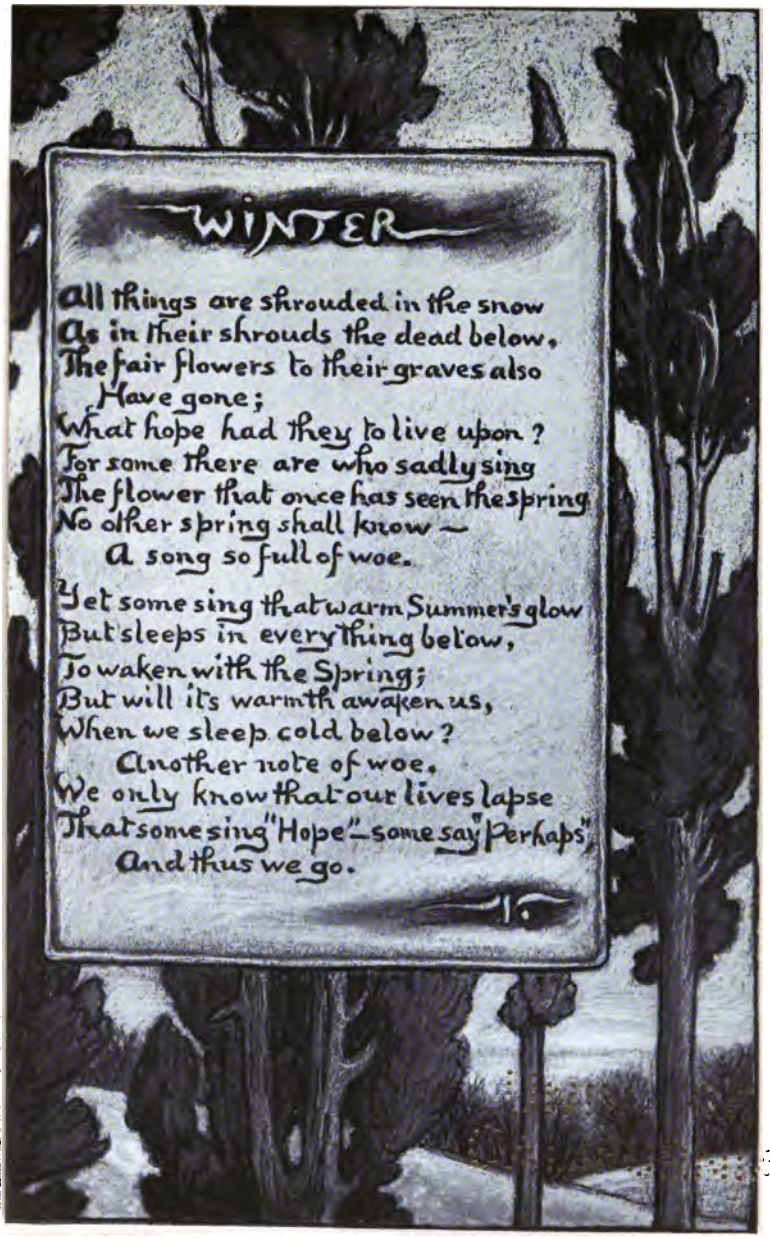
As I muse here,
Thinking how Time in one short year
May all things queer;
Lifting the Lowly, humbling the Proud,
And finally wrap all in one vast shroud,—
I wonder if these extensive views
Do not confuse
Our notions of the object and aim of Life;
By some made out to be
A striving after Harmony,
By others a striving after Strife.
But as for me
Enough is the evil of the day
And enough I sometimes say,
All the happiness that comes my way.

LXVIII.

Autumn

Old Men say—
That brightest days they find in Autumn,
When squirrels rustle among the leaves,
Golden grain they find in furrows,
Left from the gathered sheaves,
So they say.

Old Men say—
They love the best the glowing but sad colors
Seen in the West, at close of day,
But Night comes on, and friends departing
They pass themselves with the twilight away,
Alas! they say.


WINTER
All things are shrouded in the snow
As in their shrouds the dead below,
The fair flowers to their graves also
Have gone;
What hope had they to live upon?
For some there are who sadly sing
The flower that once has seen the spring
No other spring shall know —
A song so full of woe.
Yet some sing that warm Summer's glow
But sleeps in everything below,
To waken with the Spring;
But will it's warmth awaken us,
When we sleep cold below?
Another note of woe.
We only know that our lives lapse
That some sing "Hope" — some say "Perhaps",
And thus we go.

LXX.

Hope

Thou timid, brooding Spirit of the dawn,
Scared by the glare and glory of the day,
Come back I pray—As sunset saddens into night—
And watch with me the dawning of the stars,
And see those radiant orbs, forever making
Unnumbered days for worlds to us unknown.

Surely in all that space immense some little spot
We'll find wherein to face the change, and rest,
And cherish fond memories of those left behind,
Or better find our treasures gone before,
Awaiting us on some fair, distant shore,
To us as yet unseen because we're blind.

LXXI.

Panama

A SEA DIRGE

Fathoms deep in a southern sea
Lies too much 'Trusted Honesty.'
Those are dollars that were his eyes,
His shroud gilt-edged securities;
Even his hair is turned to gold
In that warm sea where he lies cold.

While he lies cold among his stocks,
Over his head the steamer rocks,
Freighted with doom from stern to stem,
Its siren sings his requiem,
While from the fever-stricken shore
Above the railroad's busy roar,
The locomotive's noisy bell
Doth ring his knell.

Costly canal—sealed is thy Fate—
Cassandra's warnings come too late,
For Honesty is dead and rusts,
Amid his tarnished gold and trusts.

LXXII.

You in Venice, I not there!
'Nough to make a beggar swear!
For sure I must a beggar be
When I cannot get to Thee;
But—

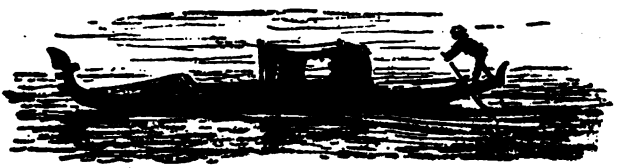
Longitude and Latitude,
And Money's offish attitude
Keep me from being there.

You in Venice,—I not nigh!
Makes me heave the heavy sigh.
The simple fact,—you there, I here,
Makes me drop the bitter tear;
But—

Longitude and Latitude,
And Money's beastly attitude,
Keep me from being nigh.

There,—you in gondolas go floating,
Here,—I in stuffy cabs go boating;
There,—Lido's air toys with your hair,
There,—Lido's waves your dainty body bear;
Here,—I can only cuss and swear;
For—

Longitude and Latitude,
And Fortune's stingy attitude,
Have spoiled more fun.
Since the world begun,
(Or rather since the world began)
To be inhabited by Man,
Than can be made up 'neath the Sun.



LXXIII.

A Vision

Is this a vision,—this sad and solemn band
At midnight stealing through the silent sky?
Are they grim Emigrants from some dead land,
Where they had seen their waning Sun
Fade to a dull glare,
And the Earth they'd made so fair,
Sink back to primal savagery,
With thorns and weeds its futile crop
Where men with monsters strive in fear
For the last blade of grass, or the last drop
Of moisture left by the vanishing atmosphere.
Had they there striven to perfect Man,
And found this did not harmonize with Nature's plan,—
Or had they met face to face
A will which did their weaker will efface;
And go they now through constellated space
Hoping to find
A God to Man more kind?
I cannot hear their song as they surge by,
And yet their serried ranks seem passing on
The burden of a dirge, but not a litany;
For all their faces bear the look of those that suffer wrong—
Defeated, not subdued, they march along.
And Death is there, for those that lag behind
Oft lay them down to die,
There they remain,

Like atoms lost in that immensity—
Their tomb the boundless sky.
I ask—"What stubborn strain of proud satanic blood
Makes you hope on, and plan and plot
To circumvent Man's destined lot?"
Meekly accept what is, or else confess you're wrong,
And change perchance to joy the burden of your song.

And then I asked for Day—
A questioning Echo answered
"How long will last thy Day?
When the light-giving Sun itself
Is doomed to slow decay."

'Twas all a vision—Morn breaks fresh and fair,
The swifts are darting through the fragrant air;
The flowers look happy after the cool, restful night
And our dark garments of Despair
Are folded out of sight.
The sweet-breathed calves to pasture go their way,
While we with song welcome the coming day.

Let's greet the Morn with merry horn
And hunt the fox today.
Death joins the band, and hand in hand
We'll drive dull Care away.
O'er dewy downs, with panting hounds
We course the fleeting hare,
Our motto still: "Let's pray and kill—
And drive away dull care."

LXXIV.

On an Illuminated Missal

Fair lines as beautiful as these
Must have been drawn in cloistered ease
By hands made perfect in an art
That springs from a contented heart.

So he could work in peace on his beloved book
His sins the Prior took;
Nor did the mingled yell
Of Guelph and Ghibelline reach his quiet cell,
Nor did their rage
Leave slightest trace on its illumined page.

There the quaint insect or simple flower,
Frail emblem of the passing hour,
Lives as fresh in purple, green and gold,
As when it did its wings or leaves unfold.

Yes—all is fresh as on that day
Its last page met his loving eye.
We see him take one lingering look
And close the volume with a sigh.

LXXV.

'Tis Better So

As some unnoticed mountain, silent and apart,
Standing for centuries a monument of peace,
Suddenly, without warning, furiously breaks out,
Pouring the glowing lava from its burning heart;
So have I stood in silence all my former days,
And only now pour out my heart's long treasured lays;
Perhaps 'tis better so,—the lava's glow
Against the coming night will brighter show.

LXXVI.

The Demon of Notre Dame

Know that each Carving hath within
Its uncouth form a former Sin
Some Sinful Carver carved therein.

I sing of that stern Demon, carved with Gothic power
High up in Notre Dame's old tower,—
That staring Demon glaring with fiendish glee
Forever at the river far below,
And scenes of pitiable woe,
As the poor outcasts of that wicked town
Their unbearable sorrows drown
In its dark muddy flow.
'Tis told how on some wild and stormy night each year
All these quaint carvings wake,
And of the Tower a Brocken make,
When, mingling with their yells,
The thunder-echoing bells
Such an infernal pandemonium make
That tardy burghers, crossing themselves in fear,
To their snug homes their hasty steps betake.
Then high aloft, see shaven monks, struggling in dragon-coils,
Mixed with spouting-mouthed gargoyles,
Break from their dizzy perches
With sudden lurches,
And far on the fierce blast sail

Through sleet and hail
And driving rain,
And circling about the sky
With screeching cry,
Come clambering to their pinnacles again.
All but the staring fiend whose stony eyes their
wicked vigils keep
On the dark arches, and the unfortunates who sweep
Through them to the melancholy morgue,—
Tired spirits whose only remaining best
Is in that dreadful place to take their rest.

LXXVII.

The Melancholy Notes

Not long can we maintain the joyous strain,
The melancholy notes will have their say.
Even the fondest fancies of the night,
Like Eurydice, dragged into the light,
Alas! die in our arms,
And their soft charms
In the full glare of day, fade all away.

LXXVIII.

Sadder than Twilight falling
With tear-like dew,
On lonely graves reposing
Under the mourning Yew;
Are the few years remaining,
Alas! so few;
That one by one are coming
A little funeral forming,
To mourn the others lying
Silent beneath the Yew;
Those happy years now silent
Under the mourning Yew.

LXXIX.

Lost in the Swamp

Come home Fader Will'um,
The whipperwill's a-callin',
De sun hab done gone down;
An' Dinah's a-waitin',
An' de chilluns all a-wonderin',
An' de hoe-cake's done gone brown.
Now wha'fo' you's a-stayin'?
Wha'fo' you's a-lingerin'
Out d'ah on de col' wet groun'?

Now Dinah's a-callin',
An' de chillun's all a-longin'
To hab you comin' home.
Don' you heah her callin'?
An de darkies all wonderin'
Why you doan cum home?
Now wha'fo' you keep stayin'
An' a-lingerin' an a-waitin'
Out dar on dat col' wet groun'?

Now Dinah's a-cryin'
An de chillun's askin',—
Dinah's cryin' on de flo'
She's tryin' to tell 'um
Dat poor Fader Will'um
Nebber will come home no mo'.

Close by Fader Will'um
De willer-wisper's shinin',
De sun hab long gone down.
Dar he's a-lyin',
A-lingerin' an a-waitin'
Alone on de col', groun'.

LXXX.

Snugness

When Simon toasts him by the fire,
And hears outside the merry choir
Of jingling sleigh-bells as they go,
Aud runners crunching in the snow,
He takes him down some picture-book
To see how fair the Tropics look.

But when he snuggles warm in bed
And hears the wild wind overhead
Tearing at the bending trees,
He thinks of sailors on the seas
And turns again his drowsy head
Thanking God he's safe in bed.

"What makes the Old Man carry on?"
The eager children cry;
"He's got his second or third wind,"
The teacher doth reply.
"But then" said they "he's getting old,
He's a back number quite;"
"Nay, nay" quoth she, it's worse than that,
He'll soon be out of sight."

LXXXII.

A Tee-total Table

Lemonade.

Some things I can forgive but not forget.
An icy memory clings about me yet.
There stood the Champagne glasses fair arrayed,
All to be filled with ice-cold—Lemonade!

Water.

When after a long absence old friends meet
And, warmly welcomed, do as warmly greet,
What of their joy can perpertrate such slaughter
As simple, cold, unmitigated—Water!

Moral.

All things in 'Moderation' should be used;
Even cold Water may be much abused.

LXXXIII.

The Usual Trouble—Want

Surely I've always had my Cakes and Ale,
And likewise always had my Beer and Skittles.
Real Happiness, we know, comes not in Chunks,
But is doled out to us in many Littles.

So here I drink to dear old Cakes and Ale,
And likewise to the noble game of Skittles,
Assure me of such things from time to time
You will not find me grumbling with my 'Wittles.'

Nor do I think I'll ever come to Want,
For punctual Want has always come to me,
Making me want more Lean or else more Fat,
Or want much more of This or less of That.

I've wanted much an Income, small but sure,
The Outcome of such Income I have yet to see.
Rhymes come a-begging,—that's because they're
poor,
All but that longed-for Income comes to me.

Economy I've tried, but all in vain.
Do what I will my spendings leave no margin.
For this financial sin, I'll come to grief,
Wrecked on a clearly seen and charted reef.

LXXXIV.

Could this old Capri skull but speak,
And tell us all about it,
'Twould straighten out much history,—
Although I rather doubt it;
For even now there's been a row
In the pleasant town in sight of us,
And though we've heard some seven sides,
We can't quite tell who made the muss,
Which makes us doubt those pleasant tales
Of garrulous Suetonius.

This skull had, where once was a tongue,
A coin of old "Timberio."
Its once bright eyes may oft have seen
That Emperor to his palace go.
In fact, it may have had the coin
From that good Emperor's own hand,
And thanked him warmly and received
A smile benevolent and bland
From him who lived so near the sky,
Teaching his people how to die.
For now one knows,—unless he's quite a fool,
Tiberius was a saint,—and kept a sunday-school.

LXXXV.

When Aeolus has put the unruly Winds all back
And they are snugly snoring in their sack,
And only Zephyrus holds sway,
Gleaming across the broad Vesuvian Bay,
I see, mid many other interesting things,
The scenes of endless Imperial junketings.

On one historic strip of water floats
In my imagination that great bridge of boats
O'er which the crazed Caligula and his rout
Pass in tumultuous riot, while they flout
All laws, both human and divine,
As history tells in many a lively line.

Meanwhile, Vesuvius, sunning his cindery sides,
In silent, treacherous peacefulness abides;
Nor takes advantage of the propitious hour
To wipe from earth the Monster in his power.
For Nature carrying out some larger plan,
Cannot take into consideration little Man,
But, catching him while sleeping or at play,
With unsuspecting thousands makes away.
Thus rivalling Caligula's whole life
In one short day.

LXXXVI.

Oddities

Walking's the oddest thing invented,—
'Tis but falling just prevented.
Constant rising—constant falling
Seems to be our destined Calling.

Also food is stimulation,
Another name for dissipation.
Its cure is fasting or privation,
The very high road to starvation.

Silence is selfish—speak your mind,
But if you're peacefully inclined,
Remember that you are but human
And never argue with a woman.

But there I go—how do I know
If I'm not treading on some fair toe?

LXXXVII.

Chippendale

Had I been Old when I was Young,
Dry-cultured, Prim, a trifle Stale,
Refined, and a good Family—
I would have been a Chippendale.

Now Plymouth Rock's no common Sod,
Its Sons in one thing never fail.
Like Kings—'Tis by the 'Grace of God'
That one is born a Chippendale.

Born in the town of Chippendale
Your struggles are of no avail.
No Chippendalian feels free
To be as bad as he'd like to be.

For even when you live abroad,
You manage to keep out of Jail.
Some scrap of decency survives
In him who's born a Chippendale.

As on your staid old path you plod,
Well may you piously thank God,
No matter how Bohemians rail
That You were born a Chippendale.

L'Envoi.

Our country now is full of Kings
Of Cotton, Steel, and other things.
In one thing only do they fail,—
None can be born a—Chippendale.

LXXXVIII.

To Aeolus

Oh! God of the winds tie up your bag,
Or let them blow it to rag;
Enough that I sit safe on shore
And see and hear the breakers roar,—
I, safe on shore.

Or send me just one lucky breeze,
From such direction as you please,
And let it bring delightful ease.
Then through my grey-green olive trees,
I'll sit and watch the raging seas,—
Quite at my ease.

Don't think I'm pining for release,
On Earth I want a little peace;
I want to sit and think things o'er
Far from the Tempest,—safe on shore,
I ask no more.

Then Aeolus tie up your bag,
Or let them blow it to a rag;
Enough that I sit safe on shore
While out at Sea thy Devils roar,—
I, snug on shore.

LXXXIX.

When blows the hot Sirocco's breeze,
And ragged clouds are scudding low,
And tall obsequious cypress trees
Stand humbly bowing in a row;—
Then old Cicala's merry cheer
Drowns the roar of ocean near.

When coming warm from Lybian lair
Over fields of fragrant bloom,
It wildly waves Lucia's hair
And blows away all thoughts of gloom,—
Then old Cicala's merry cheer
Drowns the roar of the ocean near.

XC.

The Spark

He walked and talked with common men,
His dress was that of their degree,
Yet in his Soul he dwelt apart,
Superb and Free.

High o'er the crowd he circled wide
In aeronautic mental flight,
But when the 'Spark' failed to ignite,
'Twas sad to see—

How he plunged down to common earth,
And mixed again with common men;
You never would have dreamed his hand—
Had held a Pen.

Many In One.

A man once sitting down to dine,
Found that the guests were about nine;
There was the man that others see,
And then the man he sought to be;
Also the man he thought he was
Close to the sad Reality;
While He & his wife had counted on
Sat next his own Comparison.
At least six men we now have seen,
One more—the man he might have been
Yet now I think two more I see—
They are the man he's going to be
And then the man who looks like me.

XCII.

When We Were Young

When we were young how happily
(Altho we oft went wrong)
Our days were spent in merriment
With Women, Wine and Song.

But now when old we sadly try
To do the thing that's right,
Conscience like a buzzing fly
Bothers us day and night.

If we were all made young again
Would we much better be?
Or would we do as we did then?
Ah! there's the mystery.

XCIII.

The Survival of The Unfittest

The merest jingles last as long
As the Bard's impassioned song,
So 'Mother Goose's Melodies'
Will ring in future Nurseries,
And 'Humpty Dumpty' will survive
While 'Hail Columbia's' alive,
And even old 'White, Red and Blue'
May die with 'Yankee Doodle Doo.'

XCIV.

To a Fair Lady

Leaden caskets often hold
More precious Gems than those of Gold.
This rule holds good, at least they say,
Of human Caskets made of clay.
Yet there I beg to draw the line,—
No 'Leaden Casket' yet for mine.

I'm old, but your discerning eye
Has kindly passed that detail by,
And seen a Soul as fresh to-day
As when 'twas in more youthful clay;
Yet don't mistake me for another
And regard me as a 'Brother.'
That slight would burn me like a blister,
I can't regard you as a 'Sister.'

XCV.

Evidently under Influence

Some aim to make the frightened Reader's flesh-creep
And some to make that Gentle Being's eyes-weep,
But I, casting aside such worn out wiles,
Aim only to provide that curious Creature's smiles.

Quite true it is that I ought not to roam
In fields where others are much more at home;
But nothing daunted, I keep on my foot-track
Where Angels, timid things, are seen to draw-back.

Surely strange Influences must be at work,
Urging me on to tasks I ought to shirk;
Truly miraculous must be this strange-thing
Which make one born poetically-dumb-sing.

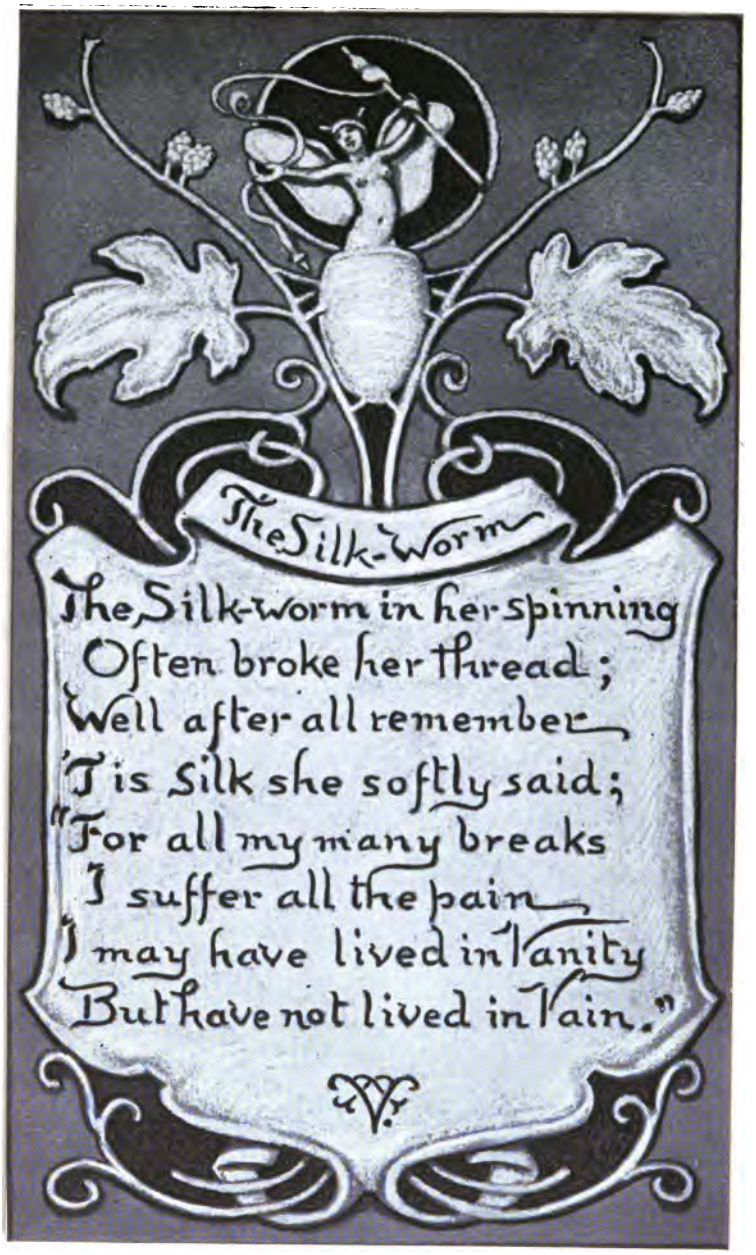
XCVI.

"Un Concetto"

Where shall I find
Again combined,
All the fair flowers and gems
With which I decked my Love?

Her amethystine eyes,
Seek in the skies;
The honey of her lips
The saucy bee now sips;
The iridescent shell
Of her pearly teeth can tell;
Her balmy breath doth stray
Amid the flowers of May.

So who can tell—who say—
If I shall ever find
Again in one sweet Maid
All these fair things combined?


The Silk-Worm
The Silk-worm in her spinning
Often broke her thread;
Well after all remember
'Tis Silk she softly said;
"For all my many breaks
I suffer all the pain
I may have lived in Vanity
But have not lived in Vain."

XCVIII.

Starch

Think of the happy ages spent,
Before Men to their detriment
Learned to stiffen their soft clothes
And thus redouble
All their woes and trouble.
Under the tyranny of 'Starch' the martinet.
Ease, Grace, and Beauty now are stiffly set;
And even Wise, as well as Silly Fools,
Follow implicitly his rigid rules.
One understands the Silly, but how about the Sane,
Who try to bow their firm, fixed necks in vain,
Wearing a hard, unyielding, galling Yoke
That the patience of a Stylites would provoke,—
Not noting while they pay this fearful Tax,
How Manners stiffen, as Morals grow more lax.

XCIX.

Modesty

I look upon these lines of mine
With fearful curiosity,
Admitting that the lighter ones
Incline to ponderosity,
And that the heavier ones possess
A dash of volatility.
Yet what I fear will show most clear
Is their profund obscurity,
In which I see between the lines
No trace of real utility.
Nor can I, searching them all through,
From ground-floor up to attic,
Find anything that shows a trace
Of what is termed—'pragmatic.'

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CI.

Old Omar

Had sorrow not oppressed his heart,
Old Omar never would have sung
Nor from a thousand sorrowing hearts
An answering echo wrung.
But now he sits 'neath every clime
Forever old—Forever young,—
Singing 'mid friends his song sublime,
The sweetest, saddest song yet sung.

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CII.

In My Copy Of Omar

Omar! When I these pictures made,
I loved as madly, drank as deep
As ever thou didst in the shade
Of roses by the river's brink.
Now Winter's come. I sit and drink
The lees of Life, and sadly think
Of sweet friends gone—I know not where—
Chill is the air of gardens bare,
And a wind now blows forlorn
That takes the rose and leaves the thorn.

NOTES

"Good idea about notes but they must be spontaneous, not pumped up." *V.*

THESE VERSES have been offered to practically all the publishers in America who promptly, cheerfully or regretfully, gracefully or abruptly refused them. This seems to have cheered the heart of Vedder for he writes:—"I am glad you finally secured the refusal or rejection of Editors. I have always longed to call my things, 'Rejected Verses—By Vedder.' I can do so now with a clear conscience. It is the first step to their becoming really known." *V.*

"MOODS." "A virulent attack of laziness has set in owing to a recent birthday, showing me that I must not lavish the rest of my life writing although I write this with pleasure." *V.*

RE "THE ONE HUNDRED AND ONE." "The title will do. I had wished to limit the poems to 99—that being the number of the 'disgrazie' or misfortunes of Pulcinello. Number 100 is a 'mal Augurio' fatal to him. I wish him to go on living,—but do as you please. You have full control as you should have." *V.*

INSCRIBED TITLE PAGE. "Will inscribe title pages or anything willingly. Will sign anything except a promissory note...My last offhander written in a copy of my book:—

'When this you see, remember me,'
May fitly be inscribed in books;
Yet many men—wielding the pen
Are remembered only by their looks:
IN both ways I'd remembered be—
BY books *and* personality.

(Make it 'By' or 'In' or 'In' and 'By'—just as you please.)" *V.*

THE POEMS. "I have been reading the 'Tea Cups' of Dr. Holmes and his comments apropos of verse making have discouraged me, for I noticed that I like some of my things better than I do his which is a sure symptom of an advanced state of the disease...I send all in hopes that some may survive. The editor will close up the ranks omitted. Of course all things are crude and must ripen before fit for the public stomach. Yet I will send them along." *V.*

XIV. LIBATIONS. The head-piece from a small bronze sculptured by Vedder has been drawn by another hand.

XVI. MEMNON. Note the signature, 'V', adapted from the Egyptian 'Eye of Horus.'

XXV. IN LUCCA. "The Goddess Fun, ever impish, suggests that these lines have a strange, shilly-shallying lilt to them." *V.*

XL. THE WINDS AT TORRE QUATRO VENTI. The title is the name of Vedder's villa perched on the saddle beneath Monte Solaro at Capri, open to the 'four winds.' Vedder made the design for his book-plate.

XLIII. MAN'S GUESS. From a long unpublished sequence entitled "DOUBT." "Doubt would be considered blasphemous and vulgar by all the goody-goody, much as it would make the unregenerate and advanced rub their hands. If to touch the faith of a child is a heinous crime, what would the Societies for the Spread of the Gospel say to this:—

'How can the missionary mild
Blast the Faith of the Moslem Child?
If the Old Testament is true
This Earth was made but for the Jew.'

'Doubt' as a little volume published with a quaint cover by 'Uhile Reddev', an Armenian, might sell or be sought for as a curiosity." *V.*

LXI. PHONETICS. The eighth line ends in Alfaru characters, seen also on the pedestal in the illustration on the opposite page.

The characters are me, ay, ah, e, o, u. Alfaru is a hieratic alphabet invented by Vedder, the characters of which are ingeniously derived from representations of natural objects. Alfaru, if generally adopted by a people, would remove all difficulties of spelling, permit the "divine afflatus" of poets to take flight unhindered, reduce the time spent on what we call 'education' to a minimum, and generally lighten the burden of the human race.

"The whole 'bag of tricks' relating to Alfaru in fonetic alphabet I shall make over to you and send where you direct. There are some good drawings among the things. The scheme is worthless but makes a fine curiosity as the record of a 'fad'—in fact breaks the record." *V.*

LXXII. PANAMA. "The above outburst was written on hearing that the Panama Canal would be ruined by the railroads. Now it turns out that it will not be ruined—at least not in *that* way."

LXXX. SNUGNESS. From "Simple Simon—His Book," by *V.* To be published in colors at some future date?

LXXXIV. THE USUAL TROUBLE—WANT. "'The integral parts of a man's life are easily counted and distinctly remembered. The happiness on the contrary is made up of minor fractions.' —Coleridge. Note the contrast—

'Real happiness we know comes not in chunks
But is doled out to us in many Littles.'" *V.*

C. "Number one hundred should be skipped. Ninety-nine were the disgrazie of Pulcinello,—one hundred would stand for his death, therefore I skip to one hundred and one,—to avoid the Evil-eye." *V.*

CI. OLD OMAR. "Where Joy most revels Grief doth most lament."—Shakespeare.

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